

Parking in the Park!

Here in Columbia, our Park Rangers ensure that visitors and park resources are safe. They patrol the parks on foot, by vehicle, and by bicycle. They must be prepared to deal with everything from children who have misplaced their parents, to guiding nature tours, inspecting trails, assisting with special events and even helping with the maintenance and litter control. They are prepared to handle situations that jeopardize their own lives and provide emergency medical services to injured park visitors.

They also enforce the City's codes and ordinances, park rules and all state laws. As certified peace officers, they sometimes make arrests and write tickets. However, unlike police agencies, whose primary duty is law enforcement, our Park Rangers duties are 70% park visitor services, 10% law enforcement, 10% emergency medical and 10% paperwork. Our Park Rangers are Columbia's "Ambassadors" to the parks.

One aspect that they are having problems with is illegal parking in Cosmo Park. Parking in all parks is permitted only in designated parking spaces. Many people think that one illegally parked vehicle won't cause a problem. Two quickly becomes four and before you know it, dozens of cars are illegally parked and roads are restricted or the natural resource is compromised.

Our Park Ranger has been ticketing vehicles that are illegally parked. Obviously, that's not what we're about. We want people to have an enjoyable experience, but at the same time, we have to maintain the integrity of the road system and ensure that emergency vehicles have the ability to access an athletic field in case they're needed.

Cosmo Park is home to approximately 1,500 parking spaces. Are all of them close to your field? Probably not, but they're certainly within an enjoyable three minute walk. When we go to the Columbia Mall we all want to find that close parking spot, but often find ourselves parking farther away than we want. We don't park on the sidewalk or in the Mall landscape bed just because a space up close isn't available.

Several years ago the parking lots near soccer fields 6, 9, 10 and 11 were expanded. Future expansions are planned for areas near the Antimi tee-ball fields and in the open space east of the two new softball fields that are under construction.

In the meantime, please park in designated parking spots. You'll be protecting park resources for future generations, keeping traffic flowing and may even save a life!

